Operational Leadership
On War's Precipice

Major John Fenzel, US Army

UNTIL RECENTLY, wars were decided largely by applying overwhelming force and maneuver. Today, the ways, means and ends of winning wars are more complex, politically charged, volatile and often unconventional. Limited interventions such as those in Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo were once regarded as anomalies but have increased in frequency since the Cold War and have blurred the distinction between what is war and what is not. The zero-sum environment that has traditionally defined conventional warfare has given way to new, "variable-sum" problems for which there are no easily discernible solutions. Perhaps by default, operational leaders in these crises have become indispensable on-scene stewards of US foreign policy and military strategy. In a crisis, operational commanders link strategic goals to intervention activities. Their perception of the situation and insightful leadership are decisive in resolving or escalating a crisis.

What are the most difficult challenges operational commanders face in crises? What determines good or bad crisis strategy? Even in retrospect, answers to these questions are elusive and subtle. Recent US interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo show that each crisis is unique and resists templated solutions. Operational commanders who identify crisis transitions early can link strategic policies with tactical means and apply resources where they are most needed. Their vision will enable them to prevent escalation and resolve crises. Commanders who do not clearly understand where they are on the crisis continuum will often muddle through with no firm direction.

The Crisis-Management Cycle

An operational commander managing a crisis negotiates and controls operational transitions from crisis to conflict, to crisis termination and to crisis resolution. Controlling these transitions requires the ability to influence the duration, scope, intensity and stability. Successful intervention ultimately depends on national policy and flexible forces.

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The commander identifies decision points during each phase of intervention. During the crisis phase, strategic operational and leaders observe, orient themselves to the situation, decide on a course of action, then prepare to intervene or negotiate. Ideally, this process will allow a preliminary theory of victory to develop. Because all interventions involve a physical presence in the crisis area, the Crisis-Management Model in Figure 1 shows how crises escalate until military, political and humanitarian components intervene.

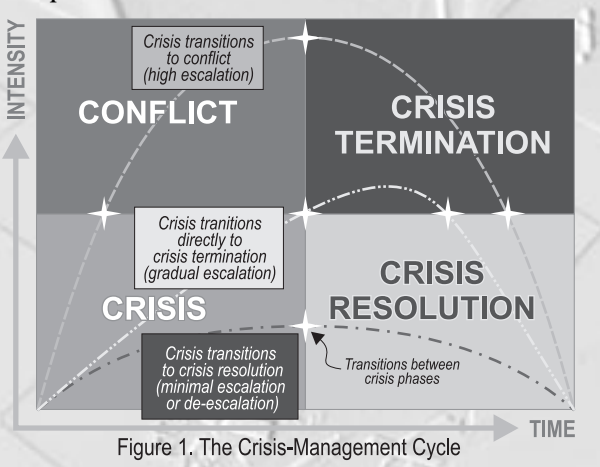

Figure 1. The Crisis-Management Cycle

Operational leaders may be involved in political negotiations leading to crisis resolution. The model presumes that crises are not simply events but processes with distinct phases that leadership and strategy can influence, and it graphically postulates that the more complex and volatile a crisis is, the more transitions occur between phases leading to resolution. This framework shows a crisis as a phased continuum to be negotiated and influenced by leaders at all levels—particularly by the operational commander on the scene.

Operational commanders must synchronize military efforts with diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives and "maneuver" to a position of advantage. In a crisis this often translates to securing a position of relevance, which parallels taking and holding key terrain.

Perhaps the most dramatic strategic change has been a shift from national leaders' "grand strategy" to a shared responsibility with operational commanders. "Military strategy," says Professor Thomas Schelling, "has become the diplomacy of violence."[1] Clearly, the challenge of operational leadership has widened in scope and complexity, and the operational leader, because of his presence and authority in the crisis area, often becomes the real executor of national policy and strategy. Canadian Major General John A. MacInnis, who served as the UN Protection Force Deputy Commander from 1993 to 1994, writes, "The strategic-operational-tactical levels-of-conflict model . . . is not wholly transferable to peacekeeping endeavors. Virtually every decision made and course of action undertaken by senior UN commanders is likely to have both political and tactical overtones. The trilevel model becomes blurred beyond recognition."[2]

Crisis and Preintervention Operations

Pre-existing conflicts stemming from tribalism, ethnic strife, inadequate governmental institutions and processes, religious animosities and territorial claims have supplanted the Cold War superpower struggles for hegemony, frequently providing the framework in which crises develop, intensify and fester into conflict. French General Lucien Poirier defines crisis as "an amorphous stage between peace and war . . . when armed conflicts incubate."[3] To extend Poirier's metaphor, the intensity of the crisis and the level of instability ultimately decide the duration of the incubation period and the nature of a crisis. Operational leaders will often be the first to discern these developing asymmetries, as manageable crises escalate into difficult-to-contain conflicts.

The doctrinal purpose of operational leadership in war is to gain and maintain freedom of action by "rob[bing] the enemy of his options while keeping open one's own."[4] Particularly during the preintervention phase of a crisis, there may be no discernible enemy, and the operational commander is less a combat commander than a crisis manager. The operational commander has become an intermediary whose goal is to create or expand options for defusing or resolving the crisis. Operational commanders must often consider widely disparate theories of "victory" offered by a variety of military, diplomatic and economic observers or participants, then forge a viable strategy to deliver peace, stability and national objectives.[5]

Various strategic arrays have been best employed in such situations when precisely targeted against causes rather than symptoms. These strategies can be characterized as direct or indirect, cooperative or coercive and may require the execution of nonstandard "maneuvers." In many insurgency and failed-state scenarios, national borders exist only on paper, and enemy activities extend well beyond assigned areas of responsibility and influence.[6] In such situations, maintaining freedom of action requires land, air and sea zones of exclusion, such as no-fly zones, weapon embargoes and safe areas. Often the commander seeks extended operational influence to enhance the security of friendly forces and noncombatants while denying freedom of action to antagonists.[7]

Time has a more distinct, and at times altogether different, influence in crises and smaller-scale contingencies than in general war. An operational commander's perception of when a crisis has proceeded to a more advanced (or parallel) phase of conflict is crucial to how he will proceed in the future. Therefore, operational leaders confront two temporal imperatives in crises: to define in advance what events or conditions must exist for a crisis to transition to conflict, and to determine how to gain the freedom of action necessary to contain and de-escalate the crisis. Throughout the crisis and preintervention phases, commanders conduct activities that will support (or force) the transition to the next operational phase. These tasks include:

- Rescuing, evacuating and providing medical care.
- Handling refugees, evacuees and displaced persons.
- Providing prepared food, water, essential supplies and materials.
- Providing logistic support.

COL William Gargiullo, *Allgemeine Schweizerische Militarzeitshrift*

A makeshift cemetery in Sarajevo for civilians killed in the ethnic fighting, 1997.

Because a crisis is so difficult to predict, the decision to intervene may arise as abruptly as the crisis itself. The intervention's timeliness often determines its relevance and ultimate effectiveness. In concept, intervening early is ideal, but as witnessed during the Rwanda and Bosnian crises, it is seldom achieved. By the time intervention is authorized and an operational force is mobilized, sovereignty and survival issues in these states often metastasize.

- Information-gathering and intelligence operations.
- Observation and surveillance.
- Negotiating and mediating.
- Restoring utilities.
- Exercising preventive diplomacy and preventive deployment.
- Managing a crisis.

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Intervention and Conflict Operations

US Armed Forces can be ineffective in nontraditional crisis environments. Their operational failures can be traced to a preoccupation with traditional fire-and-maneuver warfighting doctrine and an inability to adapt to a politically turbulent, complex

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environment. Operational commanders must synchronize military efforts with diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives and "maneuver" to a position of advantage. In a crisis this often translates to securing a position of relevance, which parallels taking and holding key terrain.

But how does an operational commander "hold the high ground" in these postmodern environments? Stripping away the high degree of abstraction common to these crises is singularly difficult and consuming. As a baseline, at least five essential subtasks define the challenge for operational leaders in all crisis interventions:

- Developing analysis that focuses on future events and trends.
- Maintaining legitimacy.
- Sustaining "escalation dominance."
- Addressing counterstrategies.
- Collecting information.

These tasks are all critical subcomponents of effective operational strategy and present complex challenges to military and civilian leaders. Further compounding the operational commander's challenges are the additional conflict and intervention activities he oversees:

- Crisis intervention.
- Patrolling and tactical operations.
- Enforcing peace.
- Disarming belligerents.
- Enforcing human rights guarantees.
- Establishing enclaves and safe areas.
- Guaranteeing and denying movement.
- Protecting humanitarian relief.
- Unofficial exchanges.
- Supporting political operations.
- Applying coercive military measures.
- Continuous and detailed surveillance.

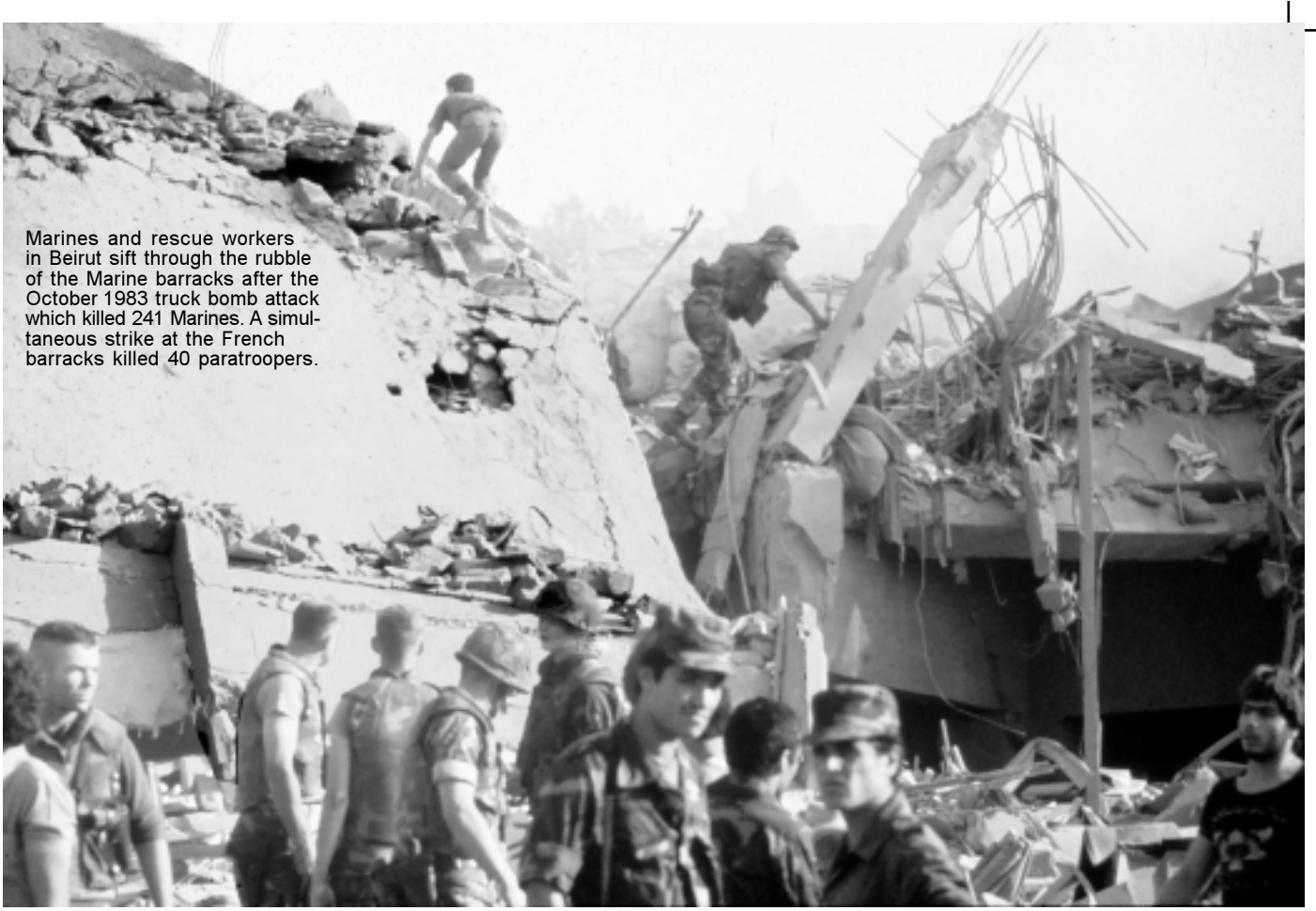
An intervention's legitimacy depends on the commander's ability to enforce proportional means and ends. By adapting strategy to a population's cultural nuances, an intervening force avoids expediencies that might exacerbate tensions in the long term.

A common misperception derived from past crisis operations is that impartiality and neutrality are synonymous. Army Field Manual (FM) 100-20, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*, states that "peacekeeping forces should be neutral in the crisis for which the force is created. . . . To preserve neutrality, the peacekeeping force must maintain an atmosphere and an attitude of impartiality."[9] However, an operational commander's efforts to be neutral and impartial with antagonists could render him ineffective in the long term. By attempting to remain neutral, an outside commander only acknowledges a conflict's existence. Conversely, a commander's effort to remain impartial ensures that intervening forces recognize a conflict's legitimate elements and understand its root causes.[10] An intervening force requires such perspective to be effective in the long term.[11]

An intervention's early stages involve escalation for each of the major players. Tensions increase for the intervening power as it risks prestige and potentially peacekeepers' lives and as crisis protagonists surrender sovereignty for a solution. Even in permissive environments, achieving these concessions is never a sure thing. The 1981 Lebanese and 1993 Somalian crises starkly show that once a military force intervenes, permissive environments can quickly become quagmires. The need for escalation dominance—the "capability to escalate a conflict to a level where an adversary cannot respond"—is the common prescription to control such transitions.[12]

In a 1992 letter to *The New York Times*, General Colin Powell explains, "Decisive means and results are always to be preferred, even if they are not always possible. So you bet I get nervous when so-called experts suggest that all we need is a little surgical bombing or a limited attack. When the desired result isn't obtained, a new set of experts then comes forward with talk of a little escalation. History has not been kind to this approach."[13] However, escalation dominance can leave a number of threats unaddressed. While the intervening force focuses exclusively on limiting escalation, subtle—but dangerous—hazards may emerge. Mission planning frequently fails to allow for changes in mission because of internal decisions—mission creep—or from events that occur "despite the actions of the intervening country"—mission swing.[14]

Two of the most serious counterstrategies operational commanders could confront are protraction and substitution. While each is as formidable as the threat of escalation, both are far less conspicuous. Protraction involves prolonging a crisis and is commonly accomplished when an adversary avoids set-piece confrontations, refuses to admit defeat and adopts a sustained, indirect strategy. Substitution involves changing the nature of the crisis by devaluing existing operational objectives or



US Army

Marines and rescue workers in Beirut sift through the rubble of the Marine barracks after the October 1983 truck bomb attack which killed 241 Marines. A simultaneous strike at the French barracks killed 40 paratroopers.

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altering the environmental landscape.[15]

An enduring lesson of the Somalian debacle is that substitution and protraction are not susceptible to broad counterstrategies founded on dominance. This fact might be precisely what makes successful crisis management so elusive and difficult, as theories of information and escalation dominance eclipse operational leadership. Indeed, addressing these threats is the essence of operational art. MacInnis' prescription for conflict strategies is equally relevant to crises: "The first and greatest challenge is to produce a strategy that recognizes warning signs; takes preventive measures; engages in conflict resolution activities or, at the very least, activities that moderate the effects of conflict; and follows up with a post conflict agenda to reduce the risk of relapse. This process must be recognized as a continuum of effort, demanding coherence, consistency, perseverance and endurance."[16] To take hold, these processes require time "for the parties to the dispute to sort out their problems."[17]

Too often, commanders rely solely on coercive strategies, which maximize the use of conventional force. Employed judiciously and proportionally, strategies that employ other forms of power and seek different aims may enjoy more success in dealing with substitution or protraction threats. Andre Beaufre suggests paralyzing the enemy with deterrent checks "as the Lilliputians tied up Gulliver."[18]

Informational power is crucial to a theater commander. Retired British General Sir Frank Kitson's practiced analysis of informational power is particularly cogent: "Often the best use which a commander can make of his troops is to have them positioned in such a way that they can see what is going on and pass the information back. . . . It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that a peacekeeping force should have a first-class intelligence service."[19] FM 100-20 reinforces the requirement to maintain a viable intelligence source, warning that poor intelligence operations can "destroy the trust which the parties should have in the peacekeeping force."[20]

US Army Special Forces Joint Commission Observer (JCO) teams in Bosnia and liaison teams in Kosovo proved the value of a language-proficient information capability. At the outset of both crises, these organizations were communications conduits,

reporting instantaneously to division and theater commanders on threats and minimizing their impact. Kitson, a former operational commander in Northern Ireland, confirms the value of this capability: "A commander who is trying to achieve his aim in negotiation plus the use of his men, will rely to a great extent on communications. Good communications are an essential part of knowing what is going on and being in a position to influence events."[21]

It is common to assume that after a crisis has been "terminated," it has also been resolved. To disengage at the crisis-termination phase is often synonymous with reopening the floodgates while the flood plain is still saturated. While others are dealing with past events and present realities, and while pressure invariably mounts to extricate forces from the crisis area, operational leaders must visualize the road to self-sustaining peace and stability.

Employing Predictive Analysis and Informational Power in Bosnia

Shaping or pre-empting escalation of an impending crisis requires skill and experience. However, success ultimately also depends on "predictive analysis" —examining information, trends, cultural realities, precedents and personalities to determine issues, the likely course of events and appropriate actions for a military unit to take.

In April 1998 the Special Operations Command and Control Element (SOCCE) for the Multinational Division-North (MND-N) at Camp Eagle, Bosnia-Herzegovina, learned that the Catholic (Croat) Archbishop of Sarajevo was planning to visit the (Serb) town of Derventa in north central Bosnia. Although the visit appeared to be innocuous, closer analysis revealed that before the war, Derventa had been a majority Bosnian-Croat town that the Serb army had captured and subsequently occupied. In accordance with the land distribution plan of the Dayton Peace Accords, Derventa lay within the Republika Srpska, just inside the MND-N boundary with the British-led MND-Southwest. The day of the planned visit was also the anniversary of the town's Serbian occupation.

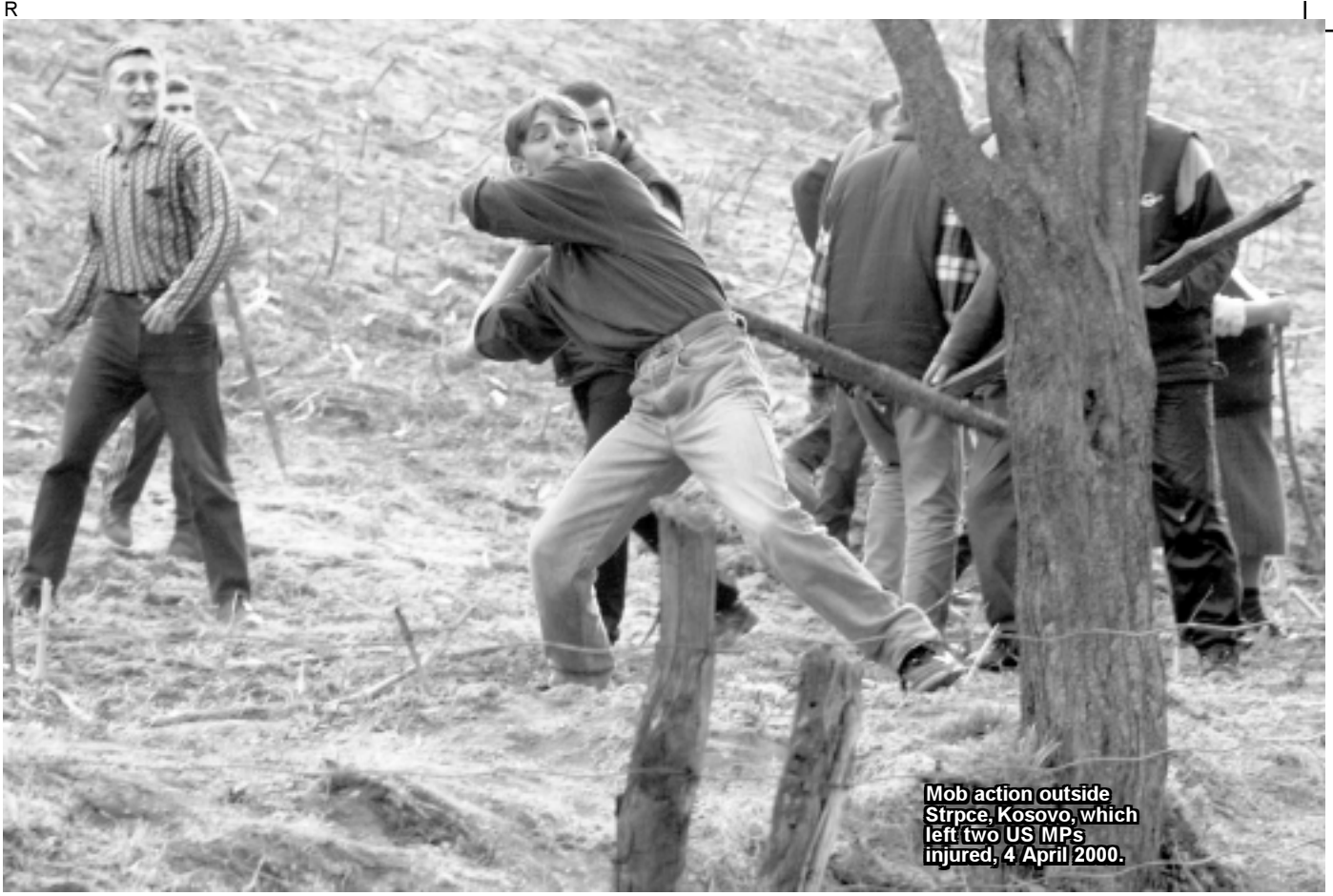
Discussions between the SOCCE's JCO team in Doboj and members of the Office of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) confirmed that several hundred former residents of Derventa were being bused in for a Catholic mass in the now-ruined Catholic church in the town square. The town square was the site of an alleged wartime execution of 10 Bosnian Serb men.

SOCCE members observed the Bosnian Serb Special Police commander's being hurriedly recalled to Banja Luka the day before the event. SOCCE's analysis of trends in indigenous activity and rhetoric revealed that there was a high probability of violence during the proposed visit. The SOCCE commander reported the findings to the MND staff. As a precaution, the MND agreed to stage armored buses at the Norwegian-Polish brigade headquarters one hour south of Derventa. The SOCCE commander concentrated his patrols in the area of the visit before daylight on the day of the visit. Just after dawn, JCO teams observed men in suits with chain saws felling trees across roads leading into Derventa.

Soon a large Serb crowd gathered. Men in suits, carrying hand-held radios and apparently responding to central direction, regulated the crowd's fury. The crowd parted when the Croats arrived and entered the church. The crowd closed around the church as the Serb organizers whipped the crowd into a frenzy. Rioters threw rocks, Molotov cocktails and a grenade that did not detonate at the church and its frightened Croat occupants. The unrest lasted more than 10 hours.

The SOCCE commander provided a detailed report to the forward operational base (FOB) in Sarajevo. The FOB provided real-time reports to the Stabilization Force commander and maneuvered a second JCO team from the British sector to work its way into Derventa from the west for 360-degree riot coverage. The JCOs remained unmolested on the mob's periphery, distracted crowd members when necessary and delivered detailed reports to the MND-N commander. Within hours, Norwegian-Polish Rapid Reaction Force elements arrived with armored buses and evacuated the Croats trapped in the church.

A week later, Derventa's former Croat citizens, displaced during the war to southwestern Bosnia, retaliated by conducting violent riots in the city of Titov Drvar against Bosnian Serb returnees. The US Army Special Forces JCO established an ingenious direct radio link to operational commanders that was instrumental in containing both incidents. During the Derventa and Drvar riots, the crowds appeared to recognize and respect JCOs and communicated freely with them. This relationship provided senior commanders situational understanding and a viable means for defusing the riots.



US Army

Mob action outside Strpce, Kosovo, which left two US MPs injured, 4 April 2000.

Though easily defined, crisis termination is difficult to achieve. As antagonists struggle to negotiate from positions of strength and advance their own agendas through unconventional and often violent means, the crisis termination phase may be the most dangerous, volatile and politically charged. Emotions intensify and animosities dissolve only over time.

Crisis Termination Operations

Crisis termination is the process of settling a crisis or conflict and serves as the foundation for mutually acceptable terms for long-term stability and peace. Though easily defined, crisis termination is difficult to achieve. As antagonists struggle to negotiate from positions of strength and advance their own agendas through unconventional and often violent means, the crisis termination phase may be the most dangerous, volatile and politically charged. Emotions intensify and animosities dissolve only over time. Combatants' risks and sacrifices during crisis-termination are immense and have compelling force-protection implications for the intervening force. Strategist Gerard Chaliand explains why the intervening force is at risk: "In most cases, the internationalization of regional disputes and the interested interference of the great powers resolve the crisis in ways, with means, and through a compromise that hardly satisfy the parties directly engaged on the ground."[22]

It is too facile simply to advocate an exit strategy or to stress visualizing the intended end state, although both elements are linked to a successful crisis "theory of victory." The compelling lesson for operational leaders is that formulating and refining a coherent and realistic exit *plan* is crucial during all crisis phases, regardless of exit *strategy*. Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, reinforces this premise further by asserting that "the manner in which US Forces terminate their involvement may influence the perception of the legitimacy of the entire operation."[23] B.H. Liddell Hart's advice to strategic commanders is equally cogent for operational commanders: if commanders "concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after effect, [they] may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war."[24] Illuminating Liddell Hart's assessment, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, commander of Allied forces at the close of World War I, presciently critiqued the Versailles Treaty: "This is not peace. This is an armistice for twenty years."[25]

During the transition to a civil authority, commanders must prepare their forces to operate in a tense, at times violent environment while allowing the core issues that underlie the crisis to be addressed in diplomatic venues. A commander's ability to work

effectively with nongovernment and independent government organizations and synchronize their efforts has emerged as one of the operational imperatives for the crisis-termination phase. However, in many ways, terminating today's crises is more complex and resource-intensive than the familiar war-termination activities of past conventional conflicts:

Operational leadership in crises now requires monitoring and enforcing cease-fire agreements, verifying security agreements, ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid and often nationbuilding. Whereas success in war is measured by victory, operational commanders measure success in the crisis-resolution phase by stability and peace . . . . [which] are achieved over time.

- Cease-fire.
- Exchanging prisoners of war.
- Separating forces, arms control, demilitarizing and demobilizing.
- Investigating complaints and allegations.
- Official exchanges and dialogue.
- Peacekeeping.
- Demining.
- Confidence-building measures.
- Reframing conflicts.
- Enforcing law and order.
- Repatriating displaced persons and refugees.
- Conducting border area operations and clearing the area of insurgent units.
- Performing recovery and disposing of the dead.
- Performing populace and resource control measures.
- Enforcing no-fly zones and weapons exclusion zones.

A common error in formulating crisis strategy is regarding it as a "goal-achievement system" or an event to solve.[26] Graham Allison writes that "from the basic conception of happenings as choices to be explained by reference to objectives . . . we must move to a conception of happenings as events whose determinants are to be investigated according to the canons that have been developed by modern science."[27] Allison's argument runs counter to the premise that if strategic or operational leadership is as an art, crises are processes that can be influenced rather than simply resolved.

This flawed concept of crisis termination is often depicted in division- and corps-level graphics as a house model, with its roof sustained by pillars. The end state is typically articulated as a "peaceful and secure environment," while goals are portrayed as pillars to construct sequentially, such as demining, arbitrating disputed territories, elections and disarmament. On paper, this is an appealing concept; in practice, however, dynamic crisis environments reveal this approach to be precarious, if not fatally flawed. Real crises are never so effectively managed with such simplistic methods. Thoughtful crisis-termination strategies develop over time, with a deliberate eye to an intricate mosaic of economic realities, cultural nuances, political will, military potential and public reactions. Synchronizing these elements to form a systematic approach to crisis management has become the essence of operational art in military operations other than war.

It is common to assume that after a crisis has been "terminated," it has also been resolved. To disengage at the crisis-termination phase is often synonymous with reopening the floodgates while the flood plain is still saturated. While others are dealing with past events and present realities and while pressure invariably mounts to extricate forces from the crisis area, operational leaders must visualize the road to self-sustaining peace and stability.

Crisis Resolution: The Road to Peace and Stability

Ideal crisis resolution actuates the original, desired end state in all four operational venues—air, ground, sea and space. The core challenge for operational leaders is attaining the proportion and stability necessary to secure and sustain peace. Managing the asymmetries that erupt between the expectations of a populace and the existing power structures, including the intervening force, may lead to further issues of impartiality and justice. Indeed, misperceptions that commonly develop during an intervention produce many of these issues. How an

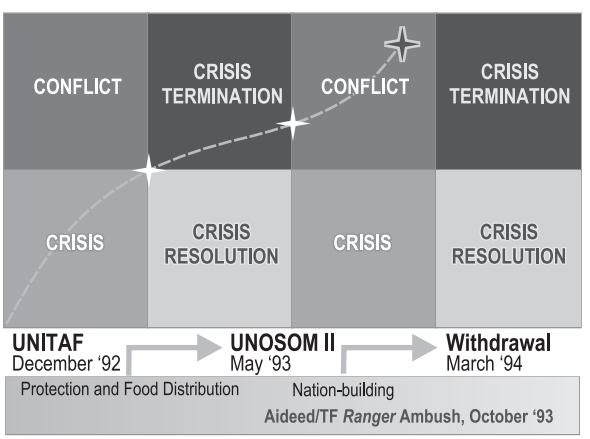


Figure 2. The Somalian Crisis

operational commander addresses these perceptions ultimately determines the nature of the peace—just as it determines the nature of the crisis.[28] Achieving equilibrium among politics, military power and popular sentiment requires steady command emphasis throughout all phases of the intervention.

Postmodern crisis resolution differs dramatically from traditional war termination in that operational commanders were once exclusively concerned with warfighting but now assume the difficult task of diplomacy as well. Operational leadership in crises now requires monitoring and enforcing ceasefire agreements, verifying security agreements, ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid and often nationbuilding. Whereas success in war is measured by victory, operational commanders measure success in the crisis-resolution phase by stability and peace. Stability and peace in crises are achieved over time, through methodical and well-planned crisis-resolution and peacebuilding activities, including:

- Disengaging.
- Humanitarian and civic action.
- Deterring violent acts.
- Protecting vital installations and critical facilities.
- Peacebuilding.
- Ensuring peacekeepers' impartiality.
- Informing the political council of peacekeeping requirements.
- Reconstructing and rehabilitating.
- Elections.
- Introducing new institutions and projects.
- Collecting and providing information to the political council.
- Withdrawing.

Saint Augustine of Hippo said, "Peace, in its final sense, is the calm that comes of order."[29] Creating order and maintaining peace are perhaps the most difficult challenges of operational leadership in crises because they involve reconciling political structures and traditional ethnic or religious identities with the terms of a political settlement or compromise. Despite the intervening force's desires to disengage, draw down and ultimately withdraw, it cannot truly resolve a crisis until ethnic hatreds, religious animosities or political tensions are managed in other ways. The crisis-resolution phase requires its own strategy and end state, closely synchronized with the plans of the international community and independent and nongovernment organizations.

Applying these principles in a crisis is never as easy as it appears because every crisis is unique and because applying conceptual doctrine to actual events and environments is inherently difficult. The Crisis-Management Model can help structure the often-inexorable series of events that comprises a crisis. Understanding events and crisis phases is essential to the success of crisis strategy and operational leadership. The Somalian crisis offers valuable insight into the interactive dynamics of strategy and leadership, particularly at the operational level.

US Army

Soldiers of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry during World War I. Corporal Adolf Hitler (*right*) was later wounded during fighting on the Western Front.

Liddell Hart warned that if commanders "concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after effect, [they] may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war." Illuminating his assessment, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, commander of Allied forces at the close of World War I, presciently critiqued the Versailles Treaty: "This is not peace. This is an armistice for twenty years."

Failed Strategy in Somalia

Following Dictator Mohamed Siad Barre's removal from power in January 1991, Somalia began to implode under the strain of an enormous power vacuum. Intraclan power struggles had become a bloody tribal civil war that swept the country. Each faction's currency of power included weapons, water, food and relief supplies. As the civil war progressed, food shortages and an inadequate relief-distribution system created a widespread humanitarian crisis. The extensive media coverage of preventable, politically induced famine heavily influenced the decision to

intervene. In response, US Central Command initiated Operation *Provide Relief* in August 1992 to provide humanitarian aid to Somalia and northeastern Kenya. Despite this effort, the crisis worsened as it became clear that goods were being diverted from starving Somalis to warlords and criminal gangs in Mogadishu.

Reports of 1,000 Somalis starving to death each day led the United States to dispatch the Unified Task Force (UNITAF). Consisting of two divisions, UNITAF was to augment and provide security for those feeding and delivering humanitarian aid to the endangered Somalis. By spring 1993 UNITAF had created a series of humanitarian relief sectors throughout southern and central Somalia. Once the sectors were established, UNITAF's mission passed to the United Nations (UN) as the dramatically downsized United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) II.

The lack of a coherent national strategy had in turn precluded a viable operational strategy from properly developing and taking hold in Somalia. The absence of a well-synchronized operational plan led to ill-coordinated tactical operations to arrest clan members in Mogadishu, eclipsing the original goal of ending starvation throughout the country.

The transition between organizations imperceptibly expanded (or, it can be argued, substituted) the UNITAF mission from relieving starvation to rebuilding Somali government institutions. To address the disaster's root cause, nationbuilding seemed a logical next step. As UNOSOM II forces began to disarm the rival clans in Mogadishu, the capital's security situation quickly deteriorated. On 5 June 1993 Somali militiamen loyal to General Mohamed Farah Aideed ambushed a Pakistani unit, killing 24 soldiers. Following a similar ambush on Nigerians, US Special Operations Task Force *Ranger* set out to find and arrest Aideed.[30]

Tribal criminal elements had effectively taken over the country. Of all the warlords, Aideed was the most visible and powerful. Senior authorities in Washington, DC, approved the search for Aideed. Given the pervasive culture of clan violence in Mogadishu, it was widely argued that only a forceful response could forestall the escalating attacks against UN forces. But at this late stage in the intervention, finding a warlord did not align well with the original goal of relieving starvation. During the summer and fall of 1993, a vast asymmetry developed between US strategy and UN policy in Somalia, producing US mission swing and confused UN policy.

On 3 October 1993 US intervention in Somalia reached a crescendo during a planned daylight raid to capture Aideed and his lieutenants. During the operation, hordes of Somali gangs confronted US forces and forced a street-to-street gun battle that left 18 US soldiers and hundreds of Somalis dead. As a result of this incident, US President William J. Clinton directed US forces to withdraw from Somalia by 31 March 1994, effectively ending the UNOSOM II mission. A closer look at the transitions between operational phases illuminates an important lesson of the Somalian Crisis.

When contrasted with the UNOSOM II effort, the initial UNITAF mission is often cited as a clean, successful model for intervention. However, both operations suffered from a series of national policy constraints that prevented a coherent, long-term strategy at the outset. The lack of a coherent national strategy had in turn precluded a viable operational strategy from properly developing and taking hold in Somalia. The absence of a well-synchronized operational plan led to ill-coordinated tactical operations to arrest clan members in Mogadishu, eclipsing the original goal of ending starvation throughout the country.

US strategy failed to recognize that successful humanitarian-relief interventions require the intervening force to restore law and order impartially and proactively.[31] Richard Betts postulates that the US failure to take charge at the outset and impose a settlement on the warring factions caused the crisis to escalate and become a renewed conflict.[32] During the initial intervention in Somalia, attempts to capture Aideed easily could have been interpreted as an inflammatory US effort to alter the Somali balance of power in favor of rival Mogadishu clan leader Ali Mahdi. As organizations changed and rules of engagement evolved, the intensity of the crisis escalated and local perception of UN impartiality diminished.

Crisis Variables

Crisis Phases	*Operational Venues*	*Instruments of National Power*
Crisis	Sea	Diplomatic
Conflict	Air	Information
Crisis Termination	Land	Military
Crisis Resolution	Space	Economic

Figure3

The US experience in Somalia is a valuable study in how the legitimacy of an intervention and the nature of a crisis can be dramatically altered without well-articulated strategic objectives and thoughtful operational strategy. In their comprehensive analysis of the Somalian intervention, Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst conclude that "no massive intervention in a failed state—even one for humanitarian purposes—can be assuredly short by plan, politically neutral in execution, or widely parsimonious in providing 'nationbuilding' development aid."[33]

Forecasting the future is never a precise exercise. However, one prediction seems certain: other crises loom—more lethal and more difficult to control. The disastrous interventions in Lebanon in 1983 and 10 years later in Somalia shattered national perceptions of crises simply as events to be quickly resolved. While US experience with crisis operations has increased, understanding of their causal dynamics and effective military responses has lagged. Critics may argue that because every crisis will be different, the situation will not improve. But as lessons emerge from past interventions, common themes provide reason for optimism. Careful analysis of past interventions reveals that crises are not simply chaotic events; they have definite phases that can be shaped toward a desired outcome. Failed interventions result from flawed strategy and often a miscarriage of operational leadership. By contrast, operational commanders lead successful interventions through thoughtful, integrated crisis strategy.

Carl von Clausewitz warned battlefield commanders "not to take the first step without considering the last" because he saw war as a continuum of events.[34] Likewise, a commander's ability to resolve a crisis is determined by his ability to transition effectively between crisis phases by applying vision across all operational venues, using the four instruments of national power to support a comprehensive, synchronized strategy. The equation for success will vary with every crisis, but the basic list of variables to consider remains constant. ***MR***

NOTES

1. Thomas C. Schelling, "The Diplomacy of Violence," *The Art of War in World History*, ed. Gerard Chaliand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1,022.
2. John A. MacInnis, "Peacekeeping and Post-Modern Conflict: A Soldier's View," *Mediterranean Quarterly,* Spring 1995, 29.
3. Lucien Poirer, "Elements of a Theory of Crisis," *The Art of War in World History*, 1,057.
4. Milan Vego, "Operational Factors," NWC 4092, 1, US Naval War College (NWC) Operations Department, Newport, Rhode Island, September 1996.
5. Andre Beaufre, "Indirect Strategy in the Nuclear Age," *The Art of War in World History*, 1,040.
6. Ibid., 1,025 and 1,039.
7. Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 185.
8. James G. Roche and George E. Pickett Jr. "Organizing the Government to Provide the Tools for Intervention," *US Intervention Policy for the Post-Cold War World: New Challenges and New Responses*, eds. Arnold Kanter and Linton F. Brooks (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), 204. The activities listed in the bullet listings are drawn from various sources, including David Carment and Patrick James, *Peace in the Midst of Wars: Preventing and Managing International Ethnic Conflicts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998) and US Army Field Manual (FM) 100-20, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office (GPO), 5 December 1990), chapter 4.
9. FM 100-20, chapter 4. FM 100-20 states later that "to be effective, and maintain their security, the peacekeeping force and its support units must remain impartial entities. . . . The peacekeeper should always remember that there are two or more sides involved, and that it is his duty to listen to all sides before making a decision."
10. MacInnis, 36. Impartiality and neutrality can be misunderstood concepts. MacInnis says that "there should be no question of peacekeepers being entirely neutral. They must, however, remain visibly impartial. . . . The key difference between peacekeepers and peace enforcers . . . is their relationship with the parties of the conflict." There is an important distinction. Walter Clarke and Robert Gosende, "The Political Component: The Missing Vital Element in US Intervention Planning," *Parameters*, Autumn 1996, 6, state, "We are not *neutral* about civil rights abuses by any groups. We should not be *neutral* in the face of repression, oppression, or acts of violence. Least of all can we be *neutral* about forces or individuals that actively oppose the implementation of the international mandates or take hostile action against our forces."
11. Clarke and Gosende, 6.
12. Harry G. Summers Jr., *The New World Strategy: A Military Policy for America's Future* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 231.
13. Colin L. Powell, "Why Generals Get Nervous," *The New York Times* (8 October 1992), A35. This letter to the editor outlined "The Powell Doctrine."
14. Jennifer Morrison Taw and John E. Peters, "Operations Other Than War: Implications for the US Army," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 6 (Winter 1995), 391.
15. Ibid, 391.
16. MacInnis, 43.
17. Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1971), 153.
18. Beaufre, 1,026.
19. Kitson, 156-57.
20. FM 100-20, chapter 4.
21. Kitson, 158.
22. Chaliand, 1,057.
23. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1995), IV-12.
24. B.H. Liddell Hart *Strategy* (New York: Meridian), 353.
25. Paul Seabury and Angelo Coderilla, *War: Ends and Means* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1989), 13.
26. Although disputed in this analysis, this approach is also articulated by Chaliand on page 1,061.
27. Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 255.
28. Stephen R. Graubard, *Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), 34; Richard K. Betts, "The Delusion of Imperial Intervention," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1994, 30-31.
29. Seabury and Coderilla, 270.
30. Jay E. Hines, "A Brief History of the United States Central Command." This paper was delivered to the Second International Conference of Saint Leo College's Center for Inter-American Studies (19 March 1997).
31. Robert Houdek, "Update on Progress in Somalia," *US Department of State Dispatch*, vol. 4, no. 8, article 2. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Public Affairs, 22 February 1993).
32. Betts, 26.
33. Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention," *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 239-52.
34. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 583.

Major John Fenzel is the operations officer for the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Carson, Colorado. He received a B.A. from Tulane University and an M.A. in National Security Affairs from the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. He is a graduate of the College of Naval Command and Staff. He has held various command and staff positions in the Continental United States, Southwest Asia and Europe, including commander of Special Forces Operational Detachment A during Operations Desert Shield *and* Desert Storm*; company commander, 5th and 10th Special Forces Groups; commander, Special Operations Command and Control Element in the British and US sectors of Bosnia; and executive officer, 2d Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group. His article, "The 5 Imperatives of Coalition Warfare," appeared as the cover story for the July 1993 issue of* Special Warfare *magazine.*